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UNCLAS HARARE 000424

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR BNEULING  
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVELLE, D. TEITELBAUM  
USDOC FOR ROBERT TELCHIN, TREASURY FOR OREN WYCHE-SHAW,  
PASS USTR FOR FLORIZELLE LISER, STATE PASS USAID FOR  
MARJORIE COPSON, US MISSION GENEVA FOR JOHN CHAMBERLIN,  
USDOL FOR ROBERT YOUNG, G/IWI FOR LYNN KHADIAGALA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [KWMN](#) [ZI](#) [HIV](#) [AIDS](#)  
SUBJECT: CHILD MARRIAGE IN ZIMBABWE

REF: STATE 36341

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The GOZ and NGOs in Zimbabwe have not focused significantly on the issue of child marriage to date, focusing more on the effects of households headed by children in a society devastated by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The following corresponds to questions in paragraph 6 of reftel:

A) Zimbabwe has two forms of marriage, civil marriage and customary marriage. The legal age for a civil marriage is 16 for girls and 18 for boys with no separate lower legal age for marriage with parental consent. Customary marriage, duly recognized under the Customary Marriages Act, does not provide for a minimum marriage age for either boys or girls. However, the Sexual Offenses Act prohibits sexual relations with anyone under 16 years of age.

B) According to Save the Children Norway, UNICEF, the Ministry of Public Service and Social Welfare, and the Child Protection Officer for the Zimbabwe Women,s Lawyers Association, there are no good statistics on child marriage prevalence in Zimbabwe. These child welfare stakeholders concentrate on more pressing problems affecting children, including especially the problem of households headed by children, an unfortunate byproduct of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. (N.B. Zimbabwe has one of the highest infection rates in the world, with more than a quarter of the adult population HIV positive, and suffers nearly 100,000 deaths a year as a result of the disease.) However, a number of the stakeholders advised that they do occasionally see underage marriages in the course of their other work.

C) There are currently no USG-funded initiatives directly aimed at child marriage in Zimbabwe. Given our limited bilateral relationship, USG assistance is limited primarily to humanitarian endeavors, such as HIV/AIDS assistance, and democracy and governance issues.

SCHULTZ